

Activity 3

The Crucible by Arthur Miller

(Poster Report)

Introduction

Arthur Miller has always been interested in the tragedy of people who, under social pressure, lose their integrity. *The Crucible* explores this theme in the context of the Salem witch trials. Many citizens of Salem lost their sense of decency and community when they went along with the crowd to continue persecution of the innocent.

Miller wrote this play in the late 1940s when Senator Joseph McCarthy chaired a committee to rid the United States government, and the nation, of Communists. During the McCarthy Era many of Arthur Miller's friends were attacked for their so-called pro-communist beliefs. Miller himself was called before the House [of Representatives] Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1956 to testify against his friends and, like his John Proctor in the play, refused to implicate them.

In this activity, you will learn about the actions of Senator Joe McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee, especially how those actions relate to the broad themes of *The Crucible*.

The Task

You will conduct a web search on such topics related to the "witch hunts" of the 1950s, then use the information you gather to make a poster in answer to the question:

How did the political events of the 1950s influence the writing of *The Crucible*?

The Process: Exploring the Web, Creating a Product

1. Choose one topic to explore further.
 - The fear of Communism in the 1950s
 - Senator Joe McCarthy
 - House Un-American Activities Committee
 - The Hollywood Ten

2. Then explore the links listed under each topic, choosing text and graphics that might relate to the question:

How did the political events of the 1950s influence the writing of *The Crucible*?

Fear of Communism in the 1950s

- [Dr. Fred Schwarz, You Can Trust the Communists \(to be Communists\)](#)
- [Truman, Harry - excerpt from speech](#) dated July 29, 1951
- [McCarran Act, or Internal Security Act \(1950\)](#) and its special way of Outing those named in anticommunist testimony
- [Communist Control Act](#), 1954 - excerpts from the legislation

Senator Joe McCarthy

- Richard H. Rovere, [Senator Joseph McCarthy](#)

House Un-American Activities Committee

- Introduction to the [House Un-American Activities Committee](#) (HUAC)
- Cedric Belfrage's ["Fever Charts, 1948-1957"](#)

The Hollywood Ten

- ["Blacklists and Other Economic Sanctions"](#)
- Actress Lillian Hellman's FBI file [broken link removed]
The [Hollywood Blacklist How to Learn From the Blacklist](#)

3. After reading the texts and taking notes carefully, pull your ideas together to answer the question above fully. The following suggestions will help you create your poster:

- Look for ways McCarthy and other committee members examined witnesses, then recall how Judge Hathorne and others in the play asked questions. Compare the two methods.
- Examine the hysteria you find in the play and the hysteria you have read about in the documents from the 1950s. Find similarities and differences.
- Use exposition, narration, description, argumentation, exposition, or some combination to support the main proposition.
- Analyze several historical records of a single event.
- Include information from all relevant perspectives, taking the validity and reliability of sources into consideration.
- Provide a formal bibliography.

Performance Standards

The **historical poster report** must:

- Present information on at least one of the topics listed above.

- Visualize the common themes and related events of *The Crucible* and the events of the 1950s.
 - Show how the political events of the 1950s might have influenced the writing of *The Crucible*.
 - Meet the standard of historical writing by
 - using exposition, narration, description, argumentation, exposition, or some combination to support the main proposition
 - analyzing several historical records of a single event
 - including information from all relevant perspectives, taking the validity and reliability of sources into consideration
 - providing a formal bibliography.
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[Activity 1](#)/[Activity 2](#)